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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PREL ECON KBCT KPAL KWBG QA

SUBJECT: QATAR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS PUSH BOYCOTT OVER GAZA

(U) KEY POINTS

-- Qatar's press reports that students at Qatar University seek to boycott Western firms, including Starbucks, that "support Israel."

-- The University's Administration reportedly has told students that any decision to close outlets such as Starbucks on campus rests with the GOQ, which has not commented on the matter.

(SBU) COMMENTS

-- There is no evidence at this stage to suggest that a boycott as described above would succeed.

-- This movement is a reminder that the GOQ's stoking the flames of Arab public discontent with Al Jazeera's unbalanced coverage of events in Gaza -- and Qatar's shuttering of the Israeli Trade Office -- was bound to embolden public expression of discontent with Israel and its Western backers, including the U.S.

End Key Points and Comments.

¶1. (U) According to January 27 press reports, students of Qatar University are pursuing an economic boycott of American and Western firms that support Israel in solidarity with a boycott movement in nearly a dozen other (unidentified) countries.

¶2. (U) Engineering student Ibrahim Saad, an organizer of the boycott in Qatar, told the press he and other students thus far have identified a half dozen firms, including Starbucks and The Coffee Shop, "known to be outright supporters of Israel." Saad said he and like-minded students aim to "mobilize public support" sufficient enough "to close down (these) business operations in Qatar."

¶3. (U) Saad claims "overwhelming support" for his position from other students at Qatar University. He says it is inconceivable that Qataris support businesses that build Jewish settlements on Palestinian land after Israel "brutally killed" Palestinian children.

¶4. (U) Qatar University officials, however, reportedly informed student organizers that they would not close targeted outlets on the school's campus, arguing that closing shops such as Starbucks is a decision that rests with the Government of Qatar. The GOQ to date has not commented on the matter.

LeBaron